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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005997

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2009

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SECURITY MEASURES FOR TRUCKERS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

REF: A. ANKARA 5379

[B](#). SECSTATE 195610

Classified By: DCM Robert S. Deutsch. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (U) This is an action request. Please see para. 9.

[2](#). (C) Summary. Turkey's MFA says truck traffic with Iraq is at relatively normal levels and that the GOT is taking pragmatic, incremental steps to improve security for Turkish truckers, understanding that there will not be total security until there is an improvement in underlying conditions in Iraq. To this end, the GOT has established a center at the Habur Gate for providing security information to Turkish truckers and welcomes the U.S. idea of beginning regular security meetings between MNF-I, Iraqi and Turkish officers. The immediate task is to operationalize this process per ref B by identifying MNF-I and IIG personnel for regular meetings at Habur, Mosul, or another location agreeable to all sides. End Summary.

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Traffic Normal/Coordination Center Established  
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[3](#). (C) Turkish MFA DDG for economic affairs Sakir Fakili updated ECON/C October 20 on GOT actions to improve security for Turkish truckers in Iraq. He said truck traffic was continuing at relatively normal levels despite what he called "ongoing strains." At the MFA's suggestion, the GOT has established an "Information and Coordination Center" at the Habur gate. The center's job is to collect and maintain a database of information about conditions in Iraq and convey that information to Turkish drivers. In addition, the Ministry has issued a "travel advisory" recommending that Turkish citizens not travel to Iraq unless necessary. (This advisory also highlights the importance of Turkish-Iraqi economic ties and notes that most of the humanitarian aid to Iraq goes through Turkey. It advises truck drivers to be in contact with the new center at Habur.)

[4](#). (C) Another initiative MFA is following up on is a suggestion by the Turkish Union of Chambers of Commerce (TOBB) to facilitate the issuance of temporary Iraqi license plates to Turkish trucks. He noted that TOBB Chairman Rifat Hisarciklioglu had made this proposal (which he said is provided for under existing land transport agreements) in meetings in Baghdad in February 2004, including with CPA. Fakili thought the subject could be discussed at the next meeting of the Iraq-Turkey Joint Economic Commission, which will meet as soon as November.

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Non-Paper on Operational Security for Convoys  
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[5](#). (C) In response to the points provided in ref B on the security MNF-I and the USG are providing for trucks bringing in humanitarian aid and coalition supplies, Fakili produced a non-paper containing specific observations about protection for convoys. These suggestions are based on feedback the MFA has received from Turkish truckers and are mainly operational in nature. We are transmitting the text of the non-paper septel.

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Regular Meetings with MNF-I Welcome  
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[6](#). (C) Fakili said that the ref B idea of regular meetings between MNF-I military commanders, Iraqi officials, and Turkish officials to share real-time information and on-the-ground threat assessments had been discussed within the Turkish government. All Turkish authorities, including the Turkish General Staff (TGS), welcomed the idea. Fakili said the GOT was prepared to offer meeting facilities at the Turkish border center at Habur. Turkish participants would likely include two TGS reps and an MFA official. He asked for U.S. help in identifying and including the appropriate Iraqi counterparts.

[7](#). (C) Fakili suggested that the meetings, at least

initially, could be held weekly. He hoped they the first meeting could be held in the first week of November. He offered the Turkish MFA representative at Habur, Sefa Yucer, as a GOT point of contact for arranging the meetings.

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Turkish Security Companies in Iraq  
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18. (C) Fakili said the MFA is working with private Turkish security companies, including a U.S.-Turkish firm called "Blackhawk," that could provide security to Turkish truckers in Iraq. He said it was the responsibility of the companies to obtain Iraqi government permission to work and carry weapons in Iraq, but repeated an earlier request for a USG opinion on the viability of this option (which would involve armed Turkish citizens traveling in Iraq). He added that the Turkish security companies were exploring setting up joint ventures with Iraqi companies to offset Iraqi concerns about foreign companies providing security in Iraq.

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Comment and Action Request  
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19. (C) Turkey's goal is to reduce risk for Turkish drivers without going to the extreme of closing off what has become profitable business for the Turkish private sector, particularly drivers from the impoverished southeast. At the same time, Turkish officials like Fakili have taken a pragmatic, non-alarmist attitude, understanding the multiple demands on U.S., coalition, and Iraqi forces and officials. Implementing the relatively low-cost actions in ref B -- most importantly beginning regular security meetings -- and responding to the inquiry on potential operations by Turkish security firms in Iraq would help the GOT continue to manage this delicate issue pragmatically. Thus we seek addressees, assistance to operationalize ref B by identifying interlocutors from MNF-I and the IIG at Habur (preferable to the Turks), or another suitable location to begin regular meetings on trucker security issues.  
EDELMAN